

3 - AN KHE

Camp Radcliff, Base Camp of the 4th Division



I arrived in the afternoon of March 27th. Like Pleiku, An Khe was located on a dusty plain. Most of the 4th Division had just been located here from Pleiku within the last couple of months. I reported to the headquarters of my new battalion, the 2/35th, also known as "Cacti Blue". This meant I reported to the

1st Sergeant, which in army slang is known as "Top". He seemed like a very mild fellow, more like a father figure than a tough-ass sergeant. He gave me a list of items to pick up at the supply depot the next day and assigned me to a temporary barracks. In the barracks, I met one guy from Lynn, Massachusetts who was on his way home! He gave me some words of encouragement and a

pipe cleaning apparatus to help keep my weapon clean. Cleaning kits were in short supply.

The next day I went down to the army post office to get a money order. My friend Tom got married while I was on leave, but I couldn't attend because I was sick from the vaccinations and injections I had received just before coming home. From there I went to the supply depot with my list of combat equipment that I was supposed to pick up.

I gave the supply depot the list of items that I needed and they proceeded to fill half of my request with some sorry-looking equipment. The other half of the list wasn't filled at all! They said that they were out of stock, or too short on items to fully fill the list! I asked them if I should come back later on or tomorrow. They laughed and said that I wouldn't live long enough to see them have an adequate supply of items. I was able to complete my list by the generosity of some of the soldiers that were going home and by buying some "Army Surplus" from the locals.

Next, I was then given directions to the ammo depot and a required list of ordinances to pick up. I hoped that my ammo wouldn't cost me too much! Luckily it turned out to be free, and you could take as much as you could carry. The minimum requirement included three seven-clip M-16 rifle bandoleers, two fragmentation grenades, two colored smoke grenades, one claymore mine, one hundred rounds of M-60 machinegun ammo, two two-pound sticks of C-4 plastic explosive, and a Law Anti-Tank Rocket.



The following morning, March 28th, I went to the "Golf Course" and catch a supply helicopter out to Fire Support Base called FSB Challenge where I was to join the 1st Platoon of Delta Company. The Golf Course was the helicopter airfield on the base. The unit that had originally built it had cleared it by hand to keep from creating a dust bowl. They tried to main maintain a grass-like field similar to a golf course. Over the years steel grating and asphalt were used to cover the field and it did not resemble a golf course anymore.

I informed the resupply people on the field that I needed a ride to Challenge and they said that they would accommodate me. After a couple of boring hours, I was placed aboard a Huey transport

helicopter, also known as a "Slick", with a load of C-Rations and told to make myself comfortable somehow. There were no doors on the cargo bay or seats within the cargo area. I moved to the middle of the bay and found a seat on top of the cardboard cases. After we took off the helicopter banked sharply and I thought the cargo and myself would slip out of the helicopter on the slippery aluminum floor. The ride lasted about twenty minutes over hilly jungle terrain. There were no villages or roads in sight. Where the hell was FSB Challenge and who were we fighting in the middle of nowhere?